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Having learned a number

I can count it, now

can reach out and pick

that many up—say plums

(you like plums, I never knew it

till the nice lady who brought them

from Pennsylvania offered us,

I said peaches but you said plums)

and hold them in my hands

eight or ten I could manage with care

and bring them to you (now

that I know you like plums),

finally have some use for what I know.

1 September 2009

for C

= = = = =

Living one way and dying another
sometimes makes sense.

But to live no way and die anyhow,
that is most curious and sad.

Count your blessings and they multiply
dismiss your pains and they run away—
thus saith the preacher
who lives on Preacher Lane
among the Brotherhood under Platt Clove
where the road runs steeply up
to all my vanished summers north of Tannersville.

1 September 2009

= = = = =

Set straight the crazed
then crook it in new curves
to make a new road
to a new Jerusalem

the old we've wasted
with our violences or
is that what a city's
really for, the slaughter

of beeves and doves and rams
among the altars,
from blood sacrifice
can never be freed?

2 September 2009

= = = = =

I like to revise everything
because everything is still alive.
A poem is not slain by print,
just given clothes to walk around
among us for a while.
A poem is what happens to us
when and as it crosses the lazy
meadow of our introspection.
Sometimes it changes its clothes.
Sometimes wears none at all.

2 September 2009

(The last line ponders the way a poem can be read, and stay in mind as shape
and feel and something known, yet no word of it remain in consciousness.
A phenomenon I've often noted in me.)

= = = = =

Lesser animals vindicated
by time, the rocks as Rhadamanthus
watch us come and go

and they do thinking too, allow
us to share shale's flights
of fancy, steps of her mind,

or sandstone's deep syntheses,
dense basalt's Bruckner maestoso,
the world is thinking

and we are thoughts –if not its
thoughts only. This will let you
dance past the bayous of being

where something else lurks.

3 September 2009

= = = = =

The eye takes part in the dance.

The onlooker's gaze is part
of the dancer's body.

Mysterious anatomies of art,
we even say: the *audience*,
the people who dance with their ears.

3 September 2009

= = = = =

Who are these people waiting to be other?

Is there a scarecrow in the cornfield

long after the corn is reaped? God

of stubble and birds laugh in still meaty furrows?

I heard a voice from the jungle crying:

the temple lasts longer than the god

and I don't know which way to turn

except to pay attention to the crows?

3 September 2009

= = = = =

I saw his wounded skin:
there was cotton: pledgets
stuck all over his face
where something jabbed in
who knows, a winged
invader from the days when
we were the only aliens
on this planet and the moon
accepted our discussions,
love bites that sounded like theology.

Then it was now. No alone.
A nation of passersby
passing by. Our empty
vaguely friendly faces
only half afraid. I have one
too, I show it to you.

In the street we look at each other
like little boys comparing penises,
we hardly know what it or we
might be for, faces might tell us,
the mouth and lips are all we see,

tell me this is love, this urban

renewal of the island soul.

We're all left-handed now—

remember when the sun

cast shadows? is there any

part of the sky that has not

spoken? Zeus had his own

talking trees up in the hills,

oaks if I can trust the translation,

back when we were all druids,

all shamans, all shut-ins stuck

inside the mind, heavy breathing

candlewax and daydreams lost.

4 September 2009

= = = = =

Lodge work and carry on
together leap
into the sturdy air
where bricks can fly
and wise men hide from rivers
hide from lakes.

4 September 2009

= = = = =

Only the rock spring
is worth to drink.
Rock milk makes remember.

Stunt-fliers of the afterlife
bracket overhead
broken whistles of the philosophers.

4 September 2009

= = = = =

Ground is Greek.

If you can walk it

it is a translation

like water, like wind.

It words you.

We try to listen.

4 September 2009

CHTHONIC

By watching to walk

I hear what the ground says.

Some days every you mothers me.

4 September 2009

= = = = =

at least put one word down—
there—and now another—
steeple on the Baptist church
in Providence what does

one of those point to anyhow
and why are they so tall
and isn't that the first of them all
in America I mean I think

Elizabeth told me so and she
certainly would know back in the days
she called herself Nosnibor and I
didn't call myself anything at all.

4 September 2009

= = = = =

Alternatives to reality
broken unripe banana
small coastal city

belief is a recent disease
before it came there was
the swoon called knowing

from which we woke up healthy
wanting the world.
Dangerous to say we.

We might be listening
and smite us from afar—
Zeus is the sky is the mirror of the earth

the big looming image
of whatever we are,
the too-ripe peach

smashes when it falls from its tree.

4 September 2009

= = = = =

Close to the boundary
where the grass gives way
a roundelay is being dance
—who knows by whom?—

but you can see the music
in such places, terraces
of clouds allow a sudden
scrim of shadows so

maybe there is someone there
or ones, not just wind
hum, not just sparrows,
stalks of tall grass

suddenly bend down.

5 September 2009

ARS POETICA

The old-fashioned kind
a mystery folded in a sigh.

5.IX.09

= = = = =

Of course there was a problem
of the sails that they needed wind
and we had left the wind behind
in my mother's chifferobe
tucked in the drawer with my diplomas
my patent of nobility my death certificate

and how do you make the skiff move
when you have no arms free to row
only those twelve sullen oarsmen
who pull languid as opium eaters on their oars
and still the boat goes
closer and closer to where you have to decide

I mean I do
I'm always confusing myself with you
and the other way round soon
one of us will have to decide
it is the end of the ocean the end of the world
the place where nothing
scoops the sea and the sky away and stays

and we have to go on
but the going will have some will in it now

a desire or determination even
to get there whatever it is
at the end of going
and sail into that dark harbor
no land and no water and no sky
and still be safe in the sheer arrival.

5 September 2009

PLACE MAUBERT 1954

What is the word for stamps.

Timbres. But I couldn't hear it.

I couldn't see it in my mind's
eye so I couldn't say it.

a new word has to go from ear
to inner eye before it gets to mouth

spell before saying.

That's why I can't talk.

When I say anything I'm writing it down.

Why I can't speak any language—

surely you don't call it English

the stuff that comes out of my mouth?

It's Old High Anxiety with a book in its pocket.

5 September 2009